

February is American
Heart Month

Fresh & Healthy Recipe

Ask the Coach

Know your Fats:
Choose Heart Healthy

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Taking Care of Muscle #1

Your heart is an amazing muscle. It continuously pumps oxygen and nutrient-rich blood throughout your body to sustain your life. This fist-sized powerhouse beats (expands and contracts) about 100,000 times per day, pumping five to six quarts of blood each minute, or about 2,000 gallons per day. The average heart beats about 70 times per minute. So if you live to be 80 years old, your heart will beat about 2,943,360,000 times.

Like all organs, the heart is made of tissue that requires oxygen and nutrients to function properly. It's up to us to provide the best oxygen and nutrient supply. We can do this by making healthy choices more often in our day.

Here are four very important heart healthy practices:

Be smoke/tobacco free. Being smoke-free provides your heart and cells the greatest amount of oxygen and allows your body to work up to its full capacity.

Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit. Low in fat and calories, veggies and fruits supply your cells and heart with "high octane" fuel packed with nutrients, antioxidants and fiber.

Be physically active. Physical activity makes your heart beat faster and harder so it becomes stronger and more effective at using and delivering oxygen and nutrients to your cells.

Manage your stressors. When you add these healthy practices to your daily lifestyle, your body will have the tools necessary to protect against the harmful effects that stressors have on your heart and cells.

Start with the easiest one for you, and start today! Pretty soon, your healthy choices will become more comfortable and automatic, and your heart will thank you.

www.aha.org; www.webmd.com; www.cdc.gov



To learn more about the health topics addressed in this newsletter, log in to **MyBlueService** from **www.bcbsfl.com**. Go to the **Living Healthy** tab and select **A-Z Health Topics from WebMD**. You can also click the **Living Healthy** tab to access timely health information, online tools and calculators, symptom checkers, informative videos and tips for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Fresh & Healthy

Recipe of the Month

Hot Crab Dip

Think all Super Bowl snacks have to be unhealthy to be tasty? Here's a delicious and easy to prepare recipe that will score big with your family and friends!

Ingredients:

- ½ cup skim milk
- ⅓ cup salsa
- 2 packages (8 oz each) reduced-fat cream cheese, cubed
- 2 packages (8 oz each) imitation crabmeat, flaked
- 1 cup thinly sliced green onions
- 1 can (4 oz) chopped green chilies

Preparation:

In a small bowl, combine milk and salsa. Transfer to a 3 quart slow cooker. Stir in cream cheese, crab, onions and chilies. Cover and simmer on low for three to four hours, stirring every 30 minutes. Serve with crackers. Makes about five cups or 20 servings.

Nutritional Analysis:

One ¼-cup serving (without crackers) equals 80 calories, 3 g fat (0 saturated fat), 23 mg cholesterol, 385 mg sodium, 5 g carbohydrate, 0 fiber, 7 g protein.



Looking for delicious, healthy recipes the whole family can enjoy? Check out our Healthy Recipes from WebMD! Simply log in to MyBlueService from bcbsfl.com and access the **Living Healthy** tab. Click on **My Health Manager** and under Healthy Fun, select **Healthy Recipes**.

Ask the Coach

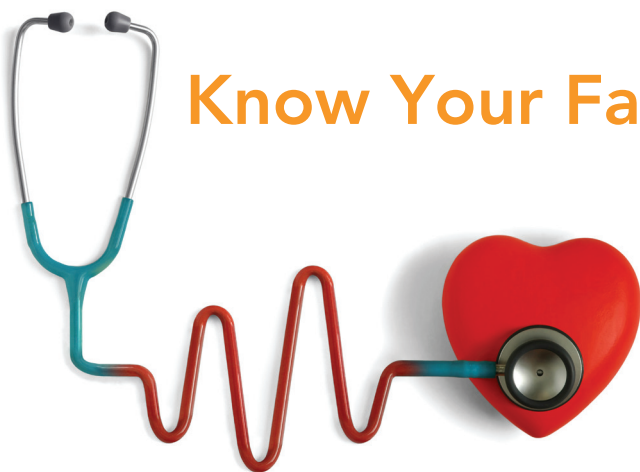


Q Does running cause arthritis in the knees?

A Osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis, occurs when the cartilage that cushions the ends of bones in your joints deteriorates over time. Eventually, if the cartilage wears down completely, you may be left with bone rubbing against bone, causing the ends of your bones to become damaged and your joints to become painful. While an exact cause is not known, a combination of aging, joint injury, muscle weakness, heredity and obesity appear to play a role in the development of osteoarthritis.

Impact exercise, such as running, applies more force to the joints and can lead to degenerative changes in already injured knees, so if you're already experiencing osteoarthritis or chronic knee pain, choose lower impact activities like cycling or swimming. However, running can improve muscle strength, decrease weight, and increase adaptation of the joints to impact, which in turn, can actually provide a protective role against the development of arthritis.

www.acsm.org; www.mayo.com



Know Your Fats: Choose Heart Healthy

Anyone old enough to remember the 90's probably remembers the fat-free craze. The idea was that if you reduced the fat in your diet, you would lose weight because you would naturally reduce calories.

Unfortunately, food manufacturers quickly met the demand for fat-free foods with cookies, cakes, ice cream and more, loading them with sugar to make up for the flavor lost with the fat, and adding back those calories! We all figured that fat-free was that golden ticket to eat unlimited quantities, but it soon backfired.

Fast forward 20 years and we've come to learn that fats are not a bad, four-lettered word, but an essential part of a healthy diet. We've also learned that not all fats are created equal.

The Good

Unsaturated fats, like olive oil, are liquid at room temperature. These are the "good" guys. Unsaturated fat can be broken down further into two categories of fat: monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat.



Monounsaturated fats are the healthiest fats. They not only help decrease your total blood cholesterol, but they maintain (and some even improve) your HDL (good) cholesterol. Ideally, most of the fat in your diet should

come from this group, which includes almonds, avocados, cashews, canola oil, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, natural peanut butter, olive oil, olives, pecans, peanuts, peanut oil, pistachios, sesame oil and sesame seeds.

Certain margarines also fall into this healthy category of fats (those made primarily of the oils listed above), even though they appear solid at room temperature. However, avoid margarines or other products that list any form of "partially hydrogenated" oil in their ingredient listing. That's a red flag for unhealthy trans fats.

Polyunsaturated fats are somewhat healthy fats that decrease your total blood cholesterol by lowering *both* the LDL (bad) cholesterol and the HDL (good) cholesterol. Lowering your total cholesterol is great, but unfortunately these fats also lower your HDL (good) cholesterol, so you should only enjoy them in moderation. You'll find polyunsaturated fats in corn oil, mayonnaise, pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds. Some margarines and most salad dressings (those made primarily of polyunsaturated or omega-3 fats) fall into this somewhat healthy category. Also in the polyunsaturated fat family, you'll find omega-6 fatty acids and omega-3 fatty acids.



Omega-3 fats consist of three types of fatty acids: ALA (alpha-linolenic acid), EPA (eicosapentaenoic), and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). Omega-3's are "essential" fatty acids, which means they must be included in your diet because they're necessary for good health and our bodies cannot manufacture them on their own. ALA is found in foods of plant origin such as flaxseed, hempseed, canola oil, soybeans, soybean oil, pumpkin seeds, pumpkin seed oil, linseeds, walnuts and walnut oil.

Once ingested, the body converts ALA into EPA and DHA. DHA is found in seafood, algae and coldwater fish such as salmon, sardines and albacore tuna. EPA is found in many of the same foods as DHA, as well as cod liver, herring, mackerel and halibut. You can find enriched eggs that contain all three types of omega-3 fatty acids at your grocery store.



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The Bad



Saturated fats, like butter, are solid at room temperature. Saturated fat is a “bad” fat because it increases both your total cholesterol and your LDL (bad) cholesterol. Less than 10% of your total daily calories should come from saturated fat (roughly 15-25 grams), depending on how many calories you consume. The lower this number, the better. Try to limit or avoid these sources of saturated fat: bacon, bacon grease, beef, butter, cheese, cocoa butter, coconut oil, cream, cream cheese, ice cream, lard, palm kernel oil, palm oil, pork, poultry, sour cream and whole milk.

The Ugly

Trans fats are the worst offenders! Trans fats are manufactured fats made by adding more hydrogen atoms to unsaturated fats. Trans fats add to the shelf life of foods and give them a better appearance, but they



also increase your total cholesterol and your LDL (bad) cholesterol, while lowering your HDL (good) cholesterol. There is no healthy amount of trans fat; even eating small amounts significantly increases your risk of heart disease. So keep your intake near 0 grams.

Food products that contain trans fat include: vegetable shortenings, hard stick margarines, crackers, candies, cookies, snack foods, fried foods, doughnuts, pastries, baking mixes and icings, store-bought baked goods and more.



The Bottom Line

Although some fats (monounsaturated, omega-3's) are healthier than others (saturated and trans fats), it's important to remember that fats are high in calories. Consuming too many, even the healthy ones, can result in weight gain. So limit your total fat intake to less than 30% of your total calories each day. This is about 45-65 grams each day (more or less depending on your calorie needs).

www.americanheart.org; www.eatright.org; www.cdc.gov